

THE
NECESSITY
OF ASSOCIATING
FOR THE PURPOSE OF OBTAINING
A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM,
ENFORCED;
IN AN ADDRESS
TO THE
FREEHOLDERS AND INHABITANTS
OF
HERTFORDSHIRE
BY A FREEHOLDER.

Without a Reform of Parliament, the liberty of the
subject cannot be preserved, nor can we expect to have
a wise, virtuous, or a disinterested administration.

PITT

L O N D O N:
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E R R A T A.



- P. 16, L. 19, *for Agreements, read Arguments.*
19, — 13, *after the word to read it.*
— 22, *for County, read Country.*
20, — 8, *for impudent read imprudent.*
— 21, *after the word the read year.*
22, — 24, *for Stewarts. read Stuarts.*
25, — 4, *for Affocitiations read Affociations,*
— 11, *for directors read directions.*

Thank you Mary

THE
NECESSITY, &c.

THE Society lately formed in London, known by the appellation of "The Friends of the People," associated for the purpose of obtaining a Parliamentary Reform, has lately been the Subject of much conversation, and various opinions have been formed of its conduct. On the one hand; The enemies of Reform, those Persons in particular who are interested in the preservation of the corruptions of Government, and of the various infringements which since the Revolution have been made on our Constitution—Such Persons have raised a hedious outcry against the Society, and have made a wicked, though a vain attempt to make its Members

appear

appear infamous in the Eyes of the Public. Happy however it is for the Nation that the Gentlemen of the Association, who are conspicuous not only for their Rank and Property, but for what is much better, their respectability of Character, their Love of Truth, their unshaken attachment to the Genuine Principles of the British Constitution—That these Gentlemen are not to be intimidated from a steady pursuit of that object which is so just in itself, and so absolutely necessary for this Country, that in the End it must be attained, notwithstanding all the opposition that interested wickedness may raise against it.

While the Enemies of the Society have begun to stir themselves on this occasion, every well wisher to his Country must rejoice to find that the Friends of the Society have not been inactive in giving it their support. The Standard of true constitutional Liberty has been erected, and numbers have already, in the short compass of a few Weeks, been flocking to it. The Society is not only increased, but many Similar Societies are formed, all of which have declared their grand object to be

A CO-OPERATION WITH THE FRIENDS OF THE
PEOPLE FOR THE PURPOSE OF OBTAINING A
PARLIAMENTARY REFORM.*

In this situation it is natural to hope and expect that every County will soon form Associations for the same most desirable purpose; and if there is *One County* which ought to distinguish itself above others for its zeal and activity, it is the County of HERTFORD, to the Freeholders of which, I have taken the Liberty more particularly to address myself. You, my friends, have so distinguished yourselves, particularly at the late General Election, in the Cause of Freedom, that it has indeed been a matter of some surprise,

* Amongst other Societies, that established at SHEFFIELD merits particular notice. Its number already Amounts to Two Thousand Five Hundred Persons. These are formed into lesser Associations of about Thirty Persons in each. Their meetings have always been conducted with that Peace, Order, and Harmony, which those ever wish to preserve who are engaged in the first of National Causes. It is only the Enemies of Reform who have in any Part of the Kingdom shewn a disposition to Tumult and Riot.

surprise, that you have not already come forward in a Body, to declare your readiness to assist the above mentioned Society. Many People begin to charge you not only with Supineness, but Inconsistency; and indeed your inactivity would to me appear very mysterious, was I not acquainted with the arts of those People who fearful of the success of a good Cause, are conscious that the only way to hinder its progress is grossly to misrepresent it. You know as well as I do, that notwithstanding the general honest disposition of the country, there are to be found in it, *Placemen, Pensioners, and Courtiers*, who are continually endeavouring to impose upon you, and to make you the dupes of their own interested designs. You know likewise there are a number of Party Men, who though they occasionally oppose the measures of administration, too plainly prove their views are of a private nature, and that their principal aim is, not the Reformation, but the Preservation of the various abuses and corruptions of Government, under ANOTHER SET OF MINISTERS. This has too often proved to be the case with respect to many Public Men who have called themselves *Whigs*, but whose only *Whiggism* has consisted in first deceiving the People, and afterwards deserting them.

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The Intention of this Address, My Brother Freeholders, is to prevent the effects that the misrepresentations of these two descriptions of Men may have upon your minds, and to warn you more particularly against the delusive Friendship of the latter. A change in Administration *merely*, is not what we want. If we must be obliged to submit to Government *with all its abuses and corruptions*; of two evils let us choose the least. The present administration have been for some Years settled in Office; they have, after creating Fifty or Sixty Peers,—after squandering away Millions in useless Armaments,—after increasing the influence of the Crown by extending the Excise Laws and other methods,—after adding to the expence of our Peace Establishment to the Amount of One Million Three Hundred Thousand Pounds, and loading us with Additional Taxes to the Amount of Three Millions Annually,—they have secured themselves a sufficient Majority in Parliament. And so numerous and powerful is the Phalanx of corruption, that were we to have a change in administration, and were the present opposition in place, it would be impossible for them to remain there, but by taking the same methods as the present Ministers have, or by be-

ing supported by a House of Commons freely and fairly chosen by the People. So that a change of Ministers, without a Total change of PRINCIPLES, of SYSTEM, would be a disadvantage.

But I sincerely hope we shall no longer be deceived by Parties; that the Inactivity of the Inhabitants of Hertfordshire will no longer be complained of: That your powerful aid is at hand: And that a Society will without further loss of Time be formed in this County, which for its Numbers, Independence and Zeal, will be equal to any Society in the Kingdom assembled for a similar Purpose. To arouse your exertions on this occasion, I beg leave to crave your attention to a few Hints, which I trust will tend to prove to you— THE NECESSITY OF A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM— THE PROPRIETY OF THE PRESENT PERIOD FOR SUCH A PURPOSE — AND THE UTILITY OF ASSOCIATIONS TO ACCOMPLISH IT.

With Respect to *the Necessity of a Parliamentary Reform*, it does not require much time or many arguments to prove it. It is a Truth which

which all Parties have at various Times asserted. The late Earl of Chatham; Sir George Saville; The Duke of Richmond, the Marquis of Landsdown, Mr. Pitt, Mr. Fox, your two County Members Mr. Plumer and Mr. Baker, have repeatedly declared a Reform essential to the salvation of this Country. I believe there is hardly a single Person to be found, even amongst the veriest tools of administration, who is either so ignorant, or so impudent, as to say that the House of Commons is Chosen by the People, as freely, as fully, and as frequently, as it ought to be. It has been proved beyond contradiction, that altho' the Inhabitants of Great Britain Amount to Eight Millions, a Majority of the House of Commons are chosen by Seven Thousand only. The fact therefore is, by far the greater part of the People are not represented; and to use the Striking Language of a Dignitary of the Church of England, *have no more concern in the Choice of Representatives, THAN IF THEY WERE THE SUBJECTS OF THE GRAND SIGNIOR!!!**

The manner in which the House of Commons is Elected, and the Term for which they are Elected, are additional reasons to prove the necessity of

* Archdeacon Paley.

a Reform. The practices made use of, first to buy the Electors, and afterwards to buy the Members, and the Profligacy with which the Traffic is carried on, are so notorious, and so scandalous, that every body reprobates them.

Are not the prices of many of our Boroughs well known? And with respect to more popular Elections, are not the Members chosen at the will of two or three Noblemen or other Men of Property, who can command or bribe most? Other questions might be asked on this part of the subject, but surely these are sufficient.

The habitual conduct of Ministers, and of the House of Commons, are still farther reasons to prove the necessity of a Reform. Here a large, and horrid field opens to our view. Has not the Government of this Country within these twenty Years lavished in wars without even attaining the object of contention, upwards of One Hundred and Twenty Millions, and are you not now paying Eight Millions of Taxes Annually, (out of Seventeen) merely to pay the Interest of such mad projects? Have not One Hundred Thousand Lives been vainly sacrificed for the sake of Conquest? But to confine your attention

tion to the present administration: Has not
 the House of Commons frequently pursued
 measures which were execrated by the People?
 Need I mention the Russian Armament, in
 which the Minister squandered Half a Million
 of Money, and afterwards sacrificed the Ho-
 nour of the Nation which he had rashly pledg-
 ed, because he feared Popular Resentment?
 Shall I repeat the various infamous methods
 by which the Minister has procured and main-
 tained his Majority? Shall I dwell on the out-
 rage your understandings and feelings and those
 of the whole Nation have recieved in the shock-
 ing Juggle of the Slave-Trade Business, by
 which that infernal traffic is continued, with-
 out any prospect of its being abolished? No:
 I wish not to inflame, or I have here matter
 enough. I only wish to convince you of the
 necessity of the wished-for Reform. There is
 however one thing which I cannot help recall-
 ing to your remembrance as you are more
 particularly interested in it. I mean the treat-
 ment which this County met with, at the late
 General Election, the mere recollection of
 which will, if you have the least regard to your
 own consistency, make you follow up the step
 you then took, by associating to prevent a re-

turn of the evil which threatened you. The Resolutions which you then entered into, are a sufficient proof of your Sentiments and feelings.

ON the Day of Nomination of Members for the County, the following Resolutions were agreed to, by a considerable Majority of the Freeholders then present.

R E S O L V E D.

“ THAT the Thanks of the Freeholders of
 “ this County be given to William Plumer,
 “ Esq; for the Zeal, Attention and Fidelity
 “ with which he has discharged his Duty as a
 “ Representative of this County in four succes-
 “ five Parliaments; and that he be requested
 “ again to offer himself a Candidate at this
 “ ensuing Election.

R E S O L V E D.

“ THAT the secret and clandestine Manner
 “ in which an English Peerage has lately been
 “ conferred on Lord Viscount Grimston, one
 “ of the late Representatives of this County in
 “ Parliament, whom no particular Public Ser-
 vices

" vices have pointed out as meriting this Dis-
 " tinction; the Time when it was so confer-
 " red, and the Circumstances under which it
 " appears to have been accepted, are convin-
 " cing Proofs, in the Opinion of the Freehold-
 " ers of this County, that the Conduct of
 " Lord Grimston has been directed by Motives
 " of a Private and Personal Nature, and not
 " by that Spirit which ought to have actuated
 " him as a Faithful Representative of the Peo-
 " ple: That it has been the Object of those by
 " whom this Measure was concerted and car-
 " ried into Execution, to *surprise* the Electors
 " of the County in *their free* choice of a Repre-
 " sentative, *who*, might deserve *their* Confi-
 " dence, to add to the Influence of a domineer-
 " ing ARISTOCRACY, already increased
 " throughout the County to an alarming De-
 " gree, AND, by inculcating Principles of
 " Servility and Corruption, to undermine the
 " more Popular Interests in the County, and
 " to impress on the Minds of Freemen this
 " melancholy Lesson; " That Court Favour
 " alone is the Channel through which Honours
 " and advancement are to be sought."

RESOLVED

R E S O L V E D.

“ That Lord Grimston, by pursuing such a
 “ Conduct, and all Parties to a Transaction so
 “ disgraceful and unconstitutional, have for-
 “ fested the good Opinion of the Freeholders of
 “ this County; and that every attempt to intro-
 “ duce and recommend a Candidate for the
 “ County by such unworthy means, calls for
 “ the JUST RESENTMENT, and ought to
 “ excite the most strenuous Resistance of every
 “ Independent Freeholder.”

I hope the Manner in which you shewed
 your JUST RESENTMENT, has not been forgot-
 You rejected the Ministerial Candidate, chose
 the person who discovered the trick attempted
 to be put upon you; and thus shewed your
 consistency. That this consistency may be con-
 tinued, I must entreat that every Freeholder
 would pause whilst he asks himself the follow-
 ing Questions.

For what did I thank Mr. Plumer? Was
 it not because he had constantly voted for the
 extension of civil and Religious Liberty, and
 for

for his professing himself a Friend to Reformation? Were not his Colours adorned with the significant words, PARLIAMENTARY REFORM? For what purpose did I so strenuously exert myself, with my Brother Freeholders, to gain Mr. Baker his election.

Was it not because we trusted that this gentleman would use every means in his power to attain the grand object? What conduct ought I now to pursue? And here I cannot but farther ask, to whom was our *resentment* due? Was it to Mr. H. to Lord G. to the Marquis of S. considered as Gentlemen in thier individual capacities? No I trust we were not actuated by such narrowness of mind and contractedness of heart, as to wreak our vengeance on the head of two or three persons of respectable private characters, merely to gratify a wanton election humour. Was it not to shew our detestation of the *peer-making* system, so destructive to the purity of the House of Commons, a system which has been pursued without regard to merit? It is a folly to suppose that *our* County was particularly singled out on the occasion. Those who will take the trouble to look over the list of Peerages created within these eight Years,

years, will find few persons who possess any other merit, than Extensive Influence in Boroughs and Counties.

Enough I hope has been mentioned to prove the absolute Necessity of A Parliamentary Reform. Until these plain Facts are set aside, we ought to persist by every constitutional means in our power to effect this measure.

There are many People who are convinced of the Necessity of a Parliamentary Reform, but who suffer themselves to be imposed upon by the pretence, "This is not the Time." We may suspect such language when we consider the quarters from whence it sprang. The Duke of Richmond and Mr. Pitt, knowing very well that they would be called upon to support in administration those Measures they thought so necessary when in opposition, and not being able to refute their own agreements, at the same Time being resolved to oppose a Reform which would ruin their own corrupt System, invented this pretence as an excuse for total dereliction of Principle. "This is not the Time." It is right on this occasion to

arguments

ask these apostates; When was the Time you associated for the purpose of obtaining a Reform? Was it not during a state of National distraction? Were we not at War in every quarter of the Globe? Had we not France, Spain, Holland, America, Hyder Ally and the Mah-rattas in the East Indies against us? Were not the Horrors of the London Riots fresh in the Memory of every one? Was not Ireland ready for Revolt? Was this the Time for agitating the question? Certainly it was not the most suitable. But surely there never was, and never can be a Time *so* suitable as the present. We are at Peace with all the World. The spirit of our Merchants, Manufacturers and Farmers, have, even in spite of the extravagance of Government, rose superior to every difficulty; our Trade or Commerce, and our Agriculture, is flourishing, and we may now peaceably set about the enquiry, how we may secure the fruits of our own Industry, without being so continually pillaged by Ministers as we have been. We challenge those people who say "This is not the Time," to inform us when it will be the Time? A question they cannot answer, I therefore most heartily

heartily unite with the Society of the Friends of the People in their Address to the Public, and which sufficiently answers all objections as to the Time. "The season of general tranquillity in the country, is, on that account the more proper for temperate reflection, and prudent exertions to accomplish any necessary improvement; *It is the Time* when practical measures for that purpose are most likely to be adopted with discretion, and pursued with moderation. If we are persuaded to wait for *other Times*, of a different complexion, for times of public complaint, or general discontent, we shall then be told, that general remedies are not fit to be proposed in the moment of particular disorder, and that it is our duty to wait for the return of quiet days, unless we mean to create or increase confusion in the County. *The result of this dilemma, if it be suffered to prevail, is pure and absolute Inactivity at present and for ever,*"

But as I doubt not, My Brother Freeholders, you are fully convinced that so far from being inactive, "at present and for ever,"

ever," we ought at least to be active at some time or other, in our endeavours to procure the desired Reform. So I trust, that you who have no interest distinct from that of your countrymen, will join with me in the old saying, NO TIME, LIKE THE TIME PRESENT.

I am however free to confess that there are some people, who it is not to be wondered, think the present time to be very improper. But who are those? I will tell you in a very few words. It is those men who were the former Friends to Reform, who are now IN PLACE, but who will never be Friends to ^{it} again, unless they are OUT OF PLACE. It is the Tribe of men who have *sinécure* places, and unmerited pensions, which they very well know, a House of Commons that fairly represented the Nation would not suffer them long to enjoy. It is those *Party Men*, who oppose administration under some popular pretences, but who hope one day to enjoy the same sweets of office, and to fatten on the spoils of their country, *Count* as some men do at present? But I will not detain you a moment by addressing such men; but shall proceed to shew you THE UTILITY, THE NECESSITY OF FORMING A SOCIETY, OR OF ASSOCIATING TO OBTAIN A PARLIAMENTARY REFORM. With respect to the Society

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of

of "The Friends of the People," their principles have have been fairly and openly published to the World, and their arguments have hitherto been unanswered. And yet there are some men who are so weak or so wicked, (perhaps both) as to sound the alarm of danger, to call their language intemperate, and to pronounce their conduct, impudent and rash. To which I beg leave to reply that whoever has read their declarations to the public, must be convinced of the futility of such charges, and of the baseness of those who would sound alarms, in order to prevent us from the pursuit of what they dare not deny, is our undoubted right. This very measure of associating was recommended by the Duke of Richmond, and Mr. Pitt in the Year 1782; and they have taken care by their conduct since they have been in administration, to prove that there is additional reason for the same measure in the ^{year} 1792. At the former period, they strenuously recommended "Associations during the Summer Months, and declarations from the People on the subject of a Parliamentary Reform." Associating therefore in the present Year for the same purpose, can only be alarming to those who ought to be alarmed, *The supporters of corruption.*

tion. We have been told that Associations "tend to inflame the minds of the people." Will the noble Duke, and the Right Honourable Gentleman I have just mentioned, declare that it was *their* design to inflame the public mind, when they associated? Do they suspect their own measures as ministers to be so very bad, that if exposed, the authors might be in danger? The truth is, no government that is formed on the firm basis of the Rights of man, need fear inspection; the more the people are acquainted, the more they will love and venerate it.

But it has been said, "that should the object of the associations, a Reform in Parliament be gain'd, this will only lead to further demands." Should that be the case, the question then should be; Are those demands just? If so, they ought to be granted. If unjust, they ought to be refused. But what would you think of a man who when you applied to him for the payment of a just debt, refused to pay it, for fear you should then make a further demand? You would scorn to keep company with such a man: You would call him a Cheat. You may then with the same justice call those who say, "We will oppose those who want a Reform, because if they obtain that,"

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they

“ they will want something else ” POLITICAL CHEATS. The Fact is, if an equal, and a frequent representation of the people was once established, all grievances might then be redressed, in a peaceable, constitutional way, and the people could have no lasting cause of complaint. This consideration renders it less necessary to dwell on another objection: “ What will the people gain by a Reform of Parliament”. Exclusive of the general good I have just mentioned, I will add, many other desirable objects would infallibly be gained. The security for our present prosperity would be strengthened. The whole corrupt system must be altered. Our Taxes would be considerably lessened. The Pension list, which now amounts to ONE HUNDRED AND SEVEN THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED AND FOUR POUNDS A YEAR, would be very much reduced. Noble Dukes, or rather *Ignoble Apostates*, would not receive Twenty or Thirty Thousand a Year from a Tax upon coals, to which they have no other pretensions, than that their Ancestors were the bastards of one of the detested *Stuarts*. We should have no more unjust wars to desolate the human race, and to impoverish our country. Ministers would not then dare to lavish our money in ridiculous armaments; The

The dreadful Traffic in the Flesh and Blood of our Fellow creatures, which we in this County, as well as the rest of the Kingdom have repeatedly reprobated, would be no longer continued. Another infamous Trade, namely, that carried on by Statesmen, DOMINEERING ARISTOCRATICS, Members of Parliament, Borough Jobbers, and Voters; all the rioting, drunkenness, perjury and bribery, with the rest of the black catalogue of vices, which disgrace a *septennial* general election would be annihilated. — in short, the numberless abuses of Government would in great measure cease; the true principles of our constitution would be restored; and we should be a Free, a virtuous, and a happy people. Our welfare would no longer depend upon the very precarious virtue of a Minister of State, but upon the firm and constitutional Foundation, of PARLIAMENTARY INDEPENDENCE.

TO ASSOCIATE is strictly CONSTITUTIONAL; consequently it is what we have a right to do. I might quote the first legal authorities to support this assertion, but after having laid before you the sentiments and the conduct of the leaders of administration a few years since, we may rest assured that they cannot charge us
with

with any thing unconstitutional, in following the line of conduct, I have ventured to recommend.

To associate in the same peaceable and constitutional manner as the Society of "The Friends of the people", is therefore the duty of the Freeholders and Inhabitants of every County in the Kingdom. I have already hinted the County of Hertford ought to be peculiarly conspicuous on this occasion; and yet I am sorry to observe that we are not only guilty of supineness, but that there are some few individuals, who seem to have apostatised from the principles they so lately espoused, and who have attempted to make our Representatives like themselves. Some of these people have dared to reprobate Mr. Baker, merely for associating to bring about what he has always professed himself to be a zealous friend to. They have blam'd him for one of the best actions of his life. They have at last persuaded him to desert a Society, for a reason by no means satisfactory to the Friends of Reform; the unhappy consequence is, these people by their idle clamours, have had influence enough to cause an upright man to depart from his duty, and have in some measure involved him

him in their own inconsistency and disgrace! The same persons appear to be doing all in their power to prevent Mr. Plumer from joining the above ~~association~~^{association}; though it is presumed that Gentleman will not thank them for treating him as if he was deficient in common sense. They have represented him as using the following language. "I have always voted for a Parliamentary Reform, and shall probably do so again, when properly brought forward. But I think it better to *wait* the ~~direct~~ *direct* ~~directors~~ of my Constituents, on a matter of such importance, than to *dictate* the measure to them".* To charge Mr. Plumer with talking in this manner, is insolently to libel him. What! When Mr. P. was unanimously thanked for his Parliamentary conduct—When his constant voting for the desired object was the principal ground of the strenuous support he received,—dare he not additionally exert himself, for fear of *dictating* to his constituents? Have they not by their conduct to him, and to his Colleague, declared their sense of the matter, and must it not be very plain to both these gentlemen that it is their duty, not only individually but collectively to support that cause they profess to wish well to.

* Letter to W. Plumer, Esq; P. 6.

As on the one hand, I shall not presume to censure our Representatives, so on the other hand I cannot suffer myself to flatter them. They will undoubtedly recollect, what is now transacting in this Kingdom. They well know that not only Administration, but that some of the leaders in opposition are endeavouring to oppose every effort now making, to bring about a Parliamentary Reform. Men who wish to counteract those efforts will be proportionably active. Not refuse their assistance to the Societies now forming. If they should by *timidity, unsettledness, or desertion*, shew their want of zeal, should they refuse to *associate*, in support of those measures, they have *individually* appeared Friends to, the public will have reason to doubt their sincerity. With respect to the few Individuals in this County, who have lately been striving to prevent our Representatives from following the path of Duty, the consistent and it is hoped the majority of the Freeholders will not forget their conduct. Should these pretended friends to Mr. Baker come forward at any future election, and again complain "Of a domineering Aristocracy already increased throughout the county to an alarming degree, undermining the more popular Interests of the county", what should be

be our reply? Your language is only that of a Party, You was invited to join an association whose ends were to check that "domineering Aristocracy", and to advance the "popular Interests", by a Reform of Parliament. Instead of uniting with them, you did every thing in your power to *damn* their virtuous efforts; and do you wish to deceive us again. No: We will rather assist the ministerial candidates, upon this just principle, that *timid, lukewarm, inconsistent pretended* friends, who desert us when their assistance might be of service, are more dangerous and do a cause more hurt, than *open enemies*.

I cannot conclude this address, without saying a word or two to that description of Freeholders, and Inhabitants, whose Hearts are warm in the grand cause of British Liberty. You have no sordid ends to serve, no party purposes to gratify. Your ardent desire is, not to destroy the constitution as your enemies falsely suggest, but to restore it to its genuine principles. Associate therefore for the laudable purpose. Let not any one discourage you by insinuating that your numbers are too few to have

have any effect. I firmly believe there are many ready to join you. Your cause is good, and your confidence ought to be proportionate. Be assured that all virtuous efforts have their effects, and produce, at least, some reward. The times are auspicious, men reason and think for themselves, and you are sure to gain the hearts, of every true friend to his Country. In hopes therefore of soon uniting myself to an association, respectable for its ZEAL, INTEGRITY, PATRIOTISM and PERSEVERANCE I with pleasure subscribe myself

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A HERTFORDSHIRE FREEHOLDER.



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